

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2016 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 44

Summer Update # 6, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Assessment

Based on sonar and run timing estimates, the 2016 summer chum salmon run is on track to be near the upper end of the preseason outlook range of 1.3 to 1.8 million fish. The 2016 Chinook salmon run is on track to be near the middle to upper end of the preseason outlook range of 130,000 to 175,000 fish. Preliminary run timing dates suggest the 2016 Chinook salmon run may be up to five days earlier than the historical average run timing. A Chinook salmon run size of this magnitude is lower than the historical early year average, but does have the potential to meet escapement goals and objectives and provide a very limited subsistence harvest. However, given the recent trend of low Yukon River Chinook salmon run sizes, it is still too early to project whether escapement goals will be met until Chinook salmon passage increases at escapement projects. At this point, the department is hopeful that the conservative management actions and sacrifices made by fishermen to date will result in attaining spawning escapements needed to sustain this Chinook salmon run for future generations.

As of June 27, three Chinook and two summer chum salmon pulses have been identified at the sonar project near Pilot Station and their upriver travel has been tracked using average swimming speed. The first pulse of approximately 23,000 Chinook salmon lasted four days at the sonar project and should be passing Rampart. A second, three-day, pulse of approximately 33,000 Chinook salmon closely followed the first pulse and should be between Ruby and Tanana. The third pulse of approximately 47,000 Chinook salmon lasted six days at the sonar project and should be between Grayling and Kaltag. The first pulse of approximately 395,000 summer chum salmon lasted six days at the sonar project and should be between Kaltag and Koyukuk. The second pulse of approximately 244,000 summer chum salmon should be between Holy Cross and Anvik. The average historical midpoint for early run Chinook salmon is June 19 and the median historical midpoint for early run summer chum salmon at the sonar project is June 25.

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group and first pulse of Chinook salmon past the sonar project near Pilot Station (May 30 to June 14) estimated 52% of the fish were of Canadian-origin, which is slightly above expectations for even-year Chinook salmon runs. The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery through June 17 was 14% age-4, 68% age-5, and 17% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. The sample size was 282 fish, of which 42% were female. The age-5 percentage was above average, the age-6 percentage was below average, and the proportion of females was above average. Genetic MSA and analysis of age-sex-length data for Chinook salmon passing by the sonar project during the next sampling strata are being performed at this time.

Fishermen are reminded that the Yukon River Inseason Salmon Management Teleconferences hosted by the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association will be held every Tuesday, beginning at 1:00 p.m. Alaska time. Dial (800) 315-6338, and enter participant code: YUKON #.

Assessment Projects

Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF) / ADF&G and YDFDA

The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE for the 8.5-inch set gillnets at the Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites combined as of June 26 is 30.44, which is above the historical average of 23.66. The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE at the 8.25-inch drift gillnet at the Big Eddy site as of June 26 is 461.48, which is above the historical average of 322.21. The combined cumulative summer chum salmon CPUE for the 5.5-inch drift gill net at the Big Eddy and Middle Mouth sites as of June 26 is 7,742.54, which is well above the historical median of 4,016.52 for this date.

Operations at the LYTF for both Chinook and summer chum salmon have been altered from previous years so caution should be taken when comparing current catch rates to historical catch rates. All healthy Chinook salmon are released alive from the test nets and injured salmon are distributed to village elders by the Tribal Councils. Fewer set net sites are being fished than in the past to reduce Chinook salmon mortality.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station / ADF&G

The sonar project near Pilot Station has been fully operational since June 1, which is one of the earliest start dates since 1995. The project is operating well and has not experienced any major issues from debris or equipment malfunction. Chinook salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 126,474 fish which is above the historical cumulative average of 116,033 Chinook salmon for this date but below the average of 162,075 for years with early timing. Summer chum salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 1,055,785 fish which is well above the historical cumulative median of 701,856 summer chum salmon for this date.

East Fork Andreafsky River Weir / USFWS

The East Fork Andreafsky River weir began operations on June 20. Chinook salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 131 fish, which is above the historical cumulative average of 35 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 12,698, which is above the historical cumulative median of 1,076 for this date. The Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG)

for the Andreafsky River is 2,100–4,900 for Chinook salmon and greater than 40,000 for summer chum salmon.

Anvik River Sonar / ADF&G

The Anvik River sonar began operations on June 16. Summer chum salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 60,154 fish, which is above the historical cumulative median of 12,969 summer chum salmon for this date. The Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) for summer chum salmon is 350,000–700,000 fish past the sonar project.

Gisasa River Weir / USFWS

The Gisasa River weir began operations on June 17, which is one of the earliest start dates since 1995. Chinook salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 10 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 16 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 4,430 fish, which is above the historical median of 255 summer chum salmon for this date.

Chena River Tower / ADF&G

The Chena River tower began operations on June 26. Chinook salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 3 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 13 Chinook salmon for this date. No summer chum salmon have been observed at the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 2,800–5,700 past the tower.

Salcha River Tower / ADF&G

The Salcha River tower began operations on June 26. Chinook salmon passage as of June 26 is estimated to be 9 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 14 Chinook salmon for this date. No summer chum salmon have been observed at the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 3,300–6,500 past the tower.

Management Strategies

In order to protect the early fish and first pulse of Chinook salmon as they made their way upriver, subsistence Chinook salmon fishing closures were implemented from the Northern Portion of the Coastal District up through District 5 based on average swimming speed.

Consistent with the management strategies discussed at the pre-season planning meeting, in an effort to provide more regular fishing opportunity rather than very short-notice “surgical” openings, the reduced regulatory schedule is being used to provide fishing opportunity in Districts 1 through 4 with gillnet mesh restricted to 6” and will continue upriver. The intent of these gillnet openings is to provide fishermen opportunity to more efficiently meet their subsistence needs for summer chum salmon while providing some limited harvest of Chinook salmon with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets. Chinook salmon caught in 6-inch gillnet gear are likely to be smaller, younger fish with a higher proportion of males. Effort has been made to put each district on this reduced schedule in such a way that the harvest is spread equitably across the Chinook run, while still protecting the first pulse.

Given the cumulative passage of Chinook salmon past the sonar project near Pilot Station, and Chinook salmon run projections that indicate escapement goals are likely to be met, subsistence

fishermen in Districts 2 through 5C will likely be provided one short 7.5-inch mesh gillnet subsistence period spaced between their reduced regulatory periods.

The 2016 summer chum salmon run is expected to be average to above average so liberal summer chum salmon subsistence fishing with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets has been provided in Districts 1 through 5-C. The selective gear subsistence fishery has been discontinued for the remainder of the summer season. Summer chum salmon commercial fishing periods with 5.5-inch gillnets not exceeding 30 meshes in depth have been provided in District 1. District 2 will have its first 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet commercial period on Monday, June 27.

General Management Reminders:

- During subsistence salmon fishing closures in the Yukon Area, gillnets 4-inch or smaller mesh of 60 feet or shorter length may be used for non-salmon species. All salmon caught in 4-inch gillnets may be retained but fishermen may not target salmon as this gear is intended for non-salmon species. If it is determined that fishermen are using gillnets larger than 4-inch mesh size to target Chinook salmon during Chinook salmon closures, enforcement may seize this gear and the opportunity to use 4-inch gillnets to target non-salmon may be removed.
- Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be retained for subsistence use.

Current Management

Southern Portion of the Coastal District (from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62 degrees North latitude): Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 1, subsistence salmon fishing will remain open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Northern Portion of the Coastal District (from 62 degrees North latitude to Point Romanof and including all state marine waters): Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 1, subsistence salmon fishing will open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for six hours before, during, and six hours after commercial fishing periods. Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be retained for subsistence use.

District 2:

Subsistence salmon fishing in District 2 is currently closed.

Effective 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 28, subsistence salmon fishing will open for one 4-hour period with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets from 7:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 28.

Starting Wednesday, June 29, at 12:01 a.m. subsistence fishing will be open 24 hours per day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for six hours before, during, and six hours after commercial fishing periods. Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be retained for subsistence use.

District 3: Currently, subsistence summer chum salmon fishing is open for two 18-hour periods per week on the following schedule with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets:

- 8:00 p.m. Sundays to 2:00 p.m. Mondays
- 8:00 p.m. Wednesdays to 2:00 p.m. Thursdays

Effective 7:00 p.m. Friday, July 1, subsistence salmon fishing will open for one 4-hour period with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets from 7:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. Friday, July 1. Following this opening, subsistence fishing will return to the two 18-hour periods per week schedule.

Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be retained for subsistence use. Between the fishing periods subsistence salmon fishing is closed. The dip net and beach seine subsistence fishery has been discontinued for the remainder of the season

Innoko River:

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Subdistrict 4-A Lower (from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Stink Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik and Grayling including all tributaries):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open for two 24-hour periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Mondays
- 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 6:00 p.m. Thursdays

Effective 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 1, subsistence salmon fishing will open for one 6-hour period with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets from 6:00 p.m. until 12:00 a.m. midnight Friday, July 1. Following this opening, subsistence fishing will return to the two 24-hour periods per week schedule.

All salmon caught in gillnets and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use. Drift and set gillnets are allowed in all of Subdistrict 4-A during subsistence salmon openings. A set gillnet may not exceed 150 fathoms and a drift gillnet may not exceed 25 fathoms in length.

Subdistrict 4-A Upper: (from Stink Creek upstream to Cone Point, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

Effective 6:00 p.m. Monday, June 27, subsistence salmon fishing will be open for two 24-hour periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays
- 6:00 p.m. Thursdays until 6:00 p.m. Fridays

Effective 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 6, subsistence salmon fishing will open for one 6-hour period with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets from 6:00 p.m. until 12:00 a.m. midnight Wednesday, July 6. Following this opening, subsistence fishing will return to the two 24-hour periods per week schedule.

All salmon caught in gillnets and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use. Drift and set gillnets are allowed in all of Subdistrict 4-A during subsistence salmon openings. A set gillnet may not exceed 150 fathoms and a drift gillnet may not exceed 25 fathoms in length.

Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby):

Currently, subsistence summer chum salmon fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with selective gear including dip nets, beach seines, and live-release fish wheels only. Any Chinook salmon caught in these gear types must be immediately released to the water alive.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Sunday, July 3, subsistence salmon fishing will be open for two 24-hour periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Mondays
- 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 6:00 p.m. Thursdays

Federal regulations allow the use of drift gillnets for the subsistence harvest of Chinook salmon in Federal public waters in Yukon River Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C from June 10 through July 14 during scheduled gillnet openings. Fishermen who want to fish with drift gillnets in Federal public waters of Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C may do so on the above schedule with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnet gear until July 14. Anyone outside of these areas are limited to set gillnets only. All salmon caught in gillnets and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use.

Koyukuk River:

Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 28, subsistence salmon fishing will be open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C (from the western edge of the mouth of Illinois Creek upstream to the ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles downstream of Waldron Creek, including the communities of Tanana and Rampart as well as the area near the Yukon River bridge):

Subsistence summer chum salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with selective gear including dip nets, beach seines, and live-release fish wheels only. Any Chinook salmon caught in these gear types must be immediately released to the water alive.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 5, subsistence salmon fishing will be open for two 24-hour periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets (set net only) and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays
- 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Saturdays

All salmon caught in set gillnets and fish wheels may be retained for subsistence use. A fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the portion of Subdistrict 5-C from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of Dall River.

Subdistrict 5-D Lower (from an ADF&G regulatory marker two miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the Hadweenzic River and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Stevens Village and Beaver):

Subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 5-D Lower is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon may be retained from these gear types.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 28, subsistence fishing for salmon in Subdistrict 5-D Lower will close.

Subdistrict 5-D Middle (from the Hadweenzic River upstream to 22 Mile Slough and including the Porcupine River and all other adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Venetie, Chalkyitsik and Fort Yukon):

Subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 5-D Middle is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week and fishermen may use 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon may be retained from these gear types.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 1, subsistence fishing for salmon in Subdistrict 5-D Middle will close.

Subdistrict 5-D Upper (from 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Circle City and Eagle):

Subsistence fishing for salmon in Subdistrict 5-D Upper is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon may be retained from these gear types.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Sunday, July 3, subsistence fishing for salmon in Subdistrict 5-D Upper will

close.

A fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the following locations: between the western tip of Garnet Island and the Dall River (Dalton Highway bridge area) and from the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B: Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B currently consists of two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays, and fisherman may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 1, subsistence fishing for salmon in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B will be restricted to gillnets that are 6-inch or smaller mesh and fish wheels to conserve Chinook salmon. Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B will remain on their regulatory subsistence salmon fishing schedule.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 1, subsistence fishing for salmon in the Kantishna River will be restricted to gillnets that are 6-inch or smaller mesh and fish wheels to conserve Chinook salmon. The Kantishna River will remain on their regulatory subsistence salmon fishing schedule of 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

Old Minto Area: Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open five days per week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays and fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Effective 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 1, subsistence fishing for salmon in the Old Minto Area will be restricted to gillnets that are 6-inch or smaller mesh and fish wheels to conserve Chinook salmon. The Old Minto Area will remain on their regulatory subsistence salmon fishing schedule.

Subsistence fishermen are reminded that a subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for salmon in the Tanana River drainage. Permits are available from the ADF&G office in Fairbanks. Subsistence fishermen fishing in the upper portion of Subdistrict 6-B, from three miles upstream of the mouth of Totchaket Slough to Wood River, are required to report their harvest catches to the department by **4:30 PM Thursday** each week by contacting the department at **(907) 459-7388**. When you call, please provide your name, permit number, fishing location, and daily catch by species for that week.

Upper Tanana Area (the Tanana River from the confluence with the mouth of Volkmar River on the north bank and the mouth of the Johnson River on the south bank upstream to the Tanana River headwaters, including the communities of Healy Lake, Dot Lake, Tanacross, Northway, and the Tok area): Subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week. Fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Subdistricts 6-C (from the regulatory marker at the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the downstream mouth of the Salcha River, which includes the communities of Fairbanks, North Pole, and Salcha):

Personal use salmon fishing currently consists of two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Friday until 12:00 p.m. noon Sunday and from 6:00 p.m. Monday until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesday. Fishermen may use 6-inch or smaller mesh set-gillnets, dip nets, and live-release fish wheels. Fish wheel and dip net fishermen must release Chinook salmon alive.

Commercial Fishing:

Fishermen requested at pre-season management meetings that the department provide an alternating schedule rather than concurrent subsistence and commercial periods for lower river districts in order to reduce competition among fishing sites. The department is endeavoring to accommodate these requests along with any limitations the processor may have when scheduling commercial periods.

District 1 (including the Black River):

Commercial summer chum salmon fishing in District 1 will open for two **4-hour** periods with gillnets **restricted to 5.5-inch or smaller mesh and a maximum of 30 meshes deep** for the following commercial fishing periods:

- Monday, June 27, 8:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. midnight
- Tuesday, June 28, 8:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. midnight

The portion open to commercial fishing will be the South Mouth area down river of the lower point of Head of Passes (also known as 10-mile island) continuing on to the Black River. The area open to commercial fishing includes Black River, Kwiguk Pass, and coastal waters from the Black River to one mile north of Kwiguk Pass. Areas closed to commercial fishing include: Middle and North Mouth up to Pt. Romanof and passes such as Aproka and Bugomowik, north of the mainstem South Mouth.

All Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be retained for subsistence use. Chinook salmon retained from commercial gillnet gear must be recorded on a fish ticket as “kept but not sold”.

All Chinook salmon d retained for subsistence use during the commercial gillnet opening must be marked by removing both tips of the tail fins. The tips must be removed before concealing the Chinook salmon from plain view or before transferring the salmon from the fishing site.

District 2 Commercial:

Effective at 12:00 p.m. noon Monday, June 27, the dip net and beach seine commercial fishery will close and commercial summer chum salmon fishing in District 2 will open for a **4-hour** commercial fishing period with gillnets **restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh** for the following commercial fishing period:

- Monday, June 27, from 12:00 p.m. noon until 4:00 p.m.

All Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be retained for subsistence use. Chinook salmon retained from commercial gillnet gear must be recorded on a fish ticket as “kept but not sold”.

All Chinook salmon retained for subsistence use during the commercial gillnet opening must be marked by removing both tips of the tail fin. The tips must be removed before concealing the Chinook salmon from plain view or before transferring the salmon from the fishing site.

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at **(866) 479-7387** (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call **(907) 459-7387**.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADF&G office in Emmonak at (907) 949-1320 or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Emmonak at (907) 949-1798.

This is an announcement by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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